

WASHINGTON, DC-Today, Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) praised a decision by a federal judge to uphold Oregon's voter-passed Death with Dignity Act. The judge criticized U.S. Attorney General Ashcroft for attempting to overturn Oregon's law and encroaching on an area of policy traditionally reserved to the states.

"This is an important step in Oregonian's five year struggle to deal with difficult end of life decisions. Oregon voters made tough, reasoned choices on this issue-twice. Attorney General Ashcroft clearly had no right to interfere with the legitimate practice of medicine or criminalize doctor's actions based upon their intent," said Blumenauer. "I, along with the citizens of Oregon, thank U.S. District Judge Robert Jones for his decision. Judge Jones was the perfect judge to make this tough decision; he is respected, conservative, and no-nonsense."

Voters approved Oregon's Death with Dignity Act in 1994 and again in 1997, making physician assisted suicide legal. In November 2001, U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft attempted to undermine the Oregon law by expanding the interpretation of the federal Controlled Substances Act to prohibit the use of controlled substances to accelerate the death process. In a lawsuit filed by the state of Oregon against the Attorney General's decision, state attorneys argued that Ashcroft inappropriately intervened in an area traditionally governed by the state and did not give the state advance notice of his decision.

For more information on Congressman Blumenauer's work on the Death with Dignity Act, visit his web site at <http://www.house.gov/blumenauer/>.